TL 1678

Lisbon, 8 March 1993

Dear Madam Clinton,

The election of your husband, a prestigious defender of human rights, to the presidency of the United States, was welcomed with great enthusiasm by the East Timorese refugee community in Portugal. His inauguration was a historic event, particularly important for us East Timorese, a people forgotten, whose most elementary rights are being systematically crushed by the Indonesian occupation forces.

His inauguration carries a greater relevance for the Timorese women, because you, his First Lady, are a respected lawyer, who is known for her commitment to human rights.

East Timor, unfortunately, has been the constant victim of human rights violations since the occupation of our territory by Indonesia in 1975, immediately after President Gerald Ford's visit to Indonesia.

Throughout these 17 years, thousands of Timorese were killed (approximately 200,000, or one-third of the population). Many have disappeared and thousands have been imprisoned. It saddens us that this wholesale genocide of the East Timorese people has been partly accomplished with arms supplied by the United States.

Torture, as Dom Ximenes Belo, the bishop of Dili, said in a recent interview, "is our daily bread". His statement is corroborated by Timorese refugees in the exterior, by journalists, and by foreign observers. The human rights violations in East Timor are tragically dramatic. They include disappearance, arbitrary and extrajudicial imprisonment, the murder of women and girls - sometimes after rape - the rape of women in front of their husbands, children taken from their mothers, and torture by methods such as electric shocks, the pulling out of nails, or cigarette burns on the breasts and on the genitals.

After the November 12, 1991 massacre in the Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili, which caused more than 900 casualties, of which 271 were killed (including young people and children), the repression in East Timor has worsened, and has generated an atmosphere of terror amongst the population. This situation became more serious with the recent capture of the leader of the Timorese resistance, Xanana Gusmão on November 20 of last year and the subsequent arrests of members of his family, many of his fighting companions, and in some cases, their entire families.

As wives and mothers we are agonised about the uncertain fate of hundreds of Timorese arrested in these past months (700 according to Amnesty International). It pains us that we cannot know their location, their health, or even if they are still alive. We do not

know on what charges they were arrested, and we are denied any form of communication and any possibility of giving our loved ones legal, economic, or humanitarian assistance.

We are concerned in particular with the situation of Xanana Gusmão, leader of the National Council of Maubere Resistance, a leader of the resistance to the brutal Indonesian occupation for 17 long years of struggle and sacrifice. He has been held incommunicable for weeks, has been forced to submit to the most intense physical and psychological coercion, and has been humiliated by being made to stage public exhibitions of "repentance".

Currently, Xanana is standing trial in Dili under Indonesian law. However, according to international law as acknowledged by the United Nations, East Timor is a non-autonomous territory of which Portugal is the administering power. We consequently do not acknowledge the legitimacy of this "trial".

Knowing of your personal commitment to the defence of human rights, we hereby ask you to appeal to Indonesia to release Xanana Gusmão and the other Timorese prisoners. Especially today, when International Women's Day is celebrated throughout the world, we are convinced that you will not fail to intercede with the government of your country, in order that it uses every means at its disposal to put an end to the atrocities that are being inflicted upon the East Timorese and particularly on the Timorese women.

If progress, well-being, and human dignity are goals that can be achieved through understanding, liberty, and democracy, then it is time to say enough to the sacrifice of the martyred East Timorese people, whose only crime is wanting to be free and independent.

With the Hope of the women of East Timor,

Madalena de Gouveia Fátima Henriques de Andrade,
Hermínia esperança A.W. da Silva Martins
Maria Augusta Varela
Lin Set Ni
Maria Reis
Manuela Bernarda Seixas
Maria Carolina Seixas Assunção
Fabiola Seixas Boavida
Virginia F. Au Cardoso
Agripina Pereira R. Mesquita
Joaquina dos Santos Araújo
Cipriana T. C. D. Pina.
Maria Ambrósia Pina
Olinda Inacia Pina
Odete Maria Gonsalves.

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Laura Barreto Rodrigues
Suzi Paula Lobato Santos
ILDA CONCEIÇÃO LOBATO
Maggaeth Maria Lobato Santos
Elisabete Rosa Lobato dos Santos
Flaminia Maria Silva Amaral
Imália da Conceicar Silva Amaral
Eulália de Fátima Silva Soares
Lindalva Maria da Silva Faria
Berta Joaquina do Rosário
Isilmina dos Santos Gomes Araújo
Lay Nho Seng.
Domingas Xavier Madeira
Laura da Costa Luz Belo Faria
Maria Madeira de Sousa
Laura Madeira de Sousa
Silvia Madeira de Sousa
Rosa Fátima Rocha
Rosa Bimo Paro-

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Pascoela Barretto

Lídia de Jesus Cardoso Pinto

Áurea Cesarina Celadores Madeira

Ana Isa Celadores Madeira

Olga Maria Madeira

Helena Madeira

Emmerenciana das Neves Boavida

Graziela Luisa das Neves Boavida

Ana Paula Neves Boavida

Alda Neves Boavida

Maria Filomena Amaro

Ana Paula Amaro Neto

Inês Filomena Amaro Neto

Filomena Luisa Amaro Neto

Maria Angela B. Borges
Vera Cristina B. Borges dos Sp.
Carla Cipriana B. Borges dos Sp.
Elisabeth Maria Borges dos Sp.
Francisca Soares Boavida Gusmão.
Joana Caetano Ximenes Gusmão.
Maria de Fátima Anselo de Oliveira.
Maria Socorro Pereira da Silva Agostinho
Odilia Maria da Silva Graça Agostinho
Sandra das Dores da Silva Agostinho
Simone Maria da Silva Graça Agostinho
Sónia Maria da Silva Graça Agostinho
Lúcia Costa

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Maria José Soares Correia

Sandra Gracias Peres

Fátima Dias

Carla Carvalho Pereira Guimarães

Beatriz da Silva Maia.

Inês Costa Araújo.

Maria Helena Brito Araújo Jesuínos

Olga dos Reis Soares

Maria José dos Santos Oliveira Neves Pinheiro

Josefa Pereira Gracias Mendonça

Maria Imaculada Soares Henrique

Carmen Inácio da Silva

Alda Maria Inácio

Maria Filomena de Carvalho Henrique

Liberata Dias de Araújo

Isabel Rodrigues

Maria Angela Fortes Tibiriçá da Silva

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1 Ilda Conceição Lobato
2 IRIA DA SILVA
3 Prisca de Carvalho
4 Ludovina da Silva
5 Angela Maria Silva
6 Joaninha Cabral
7 Isabel Branco
8 Sérica da Silva
9 Félica Silva

- Raquel Sarmento Guimarães
11 - Lícia Timann
12 - Olga da Cruz Gomes
13 - Eufrázia Tilmann

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Maria Ermelinda Barreto Albino
Maria Joana Gagu
Manuela Soares
Pascoela Araujo de Jesus Soares
Padmira dos Santos Araujo
Clara Exposto
Ana Maria de Oliveira